



BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego, similar to most jurisdictions, uses population projections/forecasts as a way to quantify future growth, analyze impacts to infrastructure, and compare alternatives as they are developed. Population forecasts are typically developed from models that account for numerous variables including land use data, demographic, and economics. There has been continued confusion with the population numbers and forecasts used for the County's General Plan Update including the purpose of population targets and estimates, State and housing element requirements relating to population, and relevance of SANDAG forecasts.

COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE POPULATION MODELING

In order to project future population and its impacts, the County of San Diego developed a population model associated with the General Plan Update to estimate future homes, and therefore impacts to infrastructure and services. Another use for this population model is to compare which alternatives would result in a greater or smaller population impact. The County model was based on the SANDAG population model; however, by developing a separate model, the County was able to incorporate additional data available for the unincorporated lands and run estimates at will, which was useful for scenario planning.

The main inputs into the population model are the General Plan Update land uses and 23 constraints that include built lands, floodplains, wetlands, public lands, groundwater and fault zones. The population model uses this information to come up with an estimated possible number of future housing units. This information is converted to population using persons per household and vacancy rate information provided by SANDAG, and added to the existing population and group quarters populations to come up with the estimated population at build out or capacity for the scenario being evaluated.

In order to maintain continuity in the different scenarios modeled during the life of the project, the County has applied the same persons per household and vacancy rate assumptions to all estimates. This has resulted in a deviation from the SANDAG models which change these assumptions with each version of the model. Also, another important difference between the two models is that the

County's model provides a build-out estimate while the SANDAG forecasts are for specific years such as 2030.

COUNTY POPULATION TARGETS

Early in the General Plan Update process, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to work with the Community Planning and Sponsor Groups to develop population recommendations for each individual community. This population target for the entire unincorporated community was 662,529.

The next step was to develop land use maps based on this target and the guiding principles of the General Plan Update. This step resulted in a working map estimated to support a population of 678,500 that was endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in 2003 as the direction for the General Plan Update.

At both of these milestones, the Board endorsed population numbers were forwarded to SANDAG for use in their population forecasts. In fact, since inception of the General Plan Update, County and SANDAG staff have closely coordinated to ensure that the SANDAG forecasts used General Plan Update maps and that the two remain consistent (which they have).

Throughout the development of the General Plan Update the overall population estimates from the land use alternatives have remained close to the original population recommendations, even if some communities are above or below the original community recommendations.

STATE AND HOUSING ELEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Aside from the very general recommendations, there is no population target mandated by the State of California or SANDAG for any city or county, and the General Plan Update remains in line with regional and statewide planning efforts.

The Housing Element is a unique part of the General Plan, regulated by State law more than any other general plan element and is certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development. A Housing Element is updated in cycles (previously every five years and now every eight) and in its requirements a jurisdiction must show that it has a certain amount of land available

FACT SHEET

POPULATION FORECASTS

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE INFORMATION

Website:

www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/gpupdate

Informational Hotline:
619.615.8289

E-mail:
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for housing development within the cycle. This is called the Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

For the General Plan Update, the Regional Housing Needs Assessment process began with the number of housing units needed for the 2005 – 2010 housing cycle, a total of 107,301 units. Of this number, 12,358 units were assigned to the County of San Diego, divided between low, very low, moderate and above moderate income groups. Information about this agreement is available from SANDAG at

http://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_1131_4555.pdf

Using this number, the County of San Diego developed the Housing Element's inventory of vacant and residential sites, looking at all vacant and underutilized residential parcels, as well as building permit information on what was built in the cycle. The inventory shows that there is enough residential land with the General Plan Update to meet this requirement. This information is in the [Housing Element Background Report](#), available on the General Plan Update website, and a summary table is provided below.

California Housing Element Law can be found in the Government Code 65580.

SANDAG POPULATION MODELING

SANDAG maintains a population model for the San Diego region, used for regional planning in conjunction with the Regional Comprehensive and Transportation Plans. Emphasis has been placed on Series 11 SANDAG Population Forecast from 2004 which predicts a population of 723,392 people for the County in 2030, substantially higher

than the County's population capacity estimate for the General Plan Update. However, two key facts should be considered in any comparison. First, SANDAG used the General Plan Update land use map in the Series 11 as the basis for maximum possible growth in the unincorporated area. Second, the future units that SANDAG was projecting were actually about 3,000 less than the estimated capacity in the County's model. The main difference in the population numbers were the assumptions that SANDAG was using compared to those that the County estimates were based on.

SANDAG has now released preliminary results from the Series 12 2050 Forecast which have also been based on the General Plan Update maps. They estimate that the unincorporated County of San Diego will grow to a population of 616,820 by 2030 and 694,464 by 2050. This is a significant reduction from the previous 2030 forecast of 723,392. The reduction is a result of the cities within the region planning for more growth which decreases pressures on the unincorporated area.

This information reaffirms the County of San Diego's population modeling and the appropriateness of the General Plan Update capacity within the regional context. In fact, when using SANDAG assumptions to adjust the capacity estimate for the land use map tentatively recommended by the Planning Commission in December 2009, the numbers reveal that the capacity of the General Plan Update remains above SANDAG forecasts.

A table below provides a summary of various population estimates and forecasts that have been developed during the General Plan Process.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment and Inventory of Vacant and Underutilized Sites*					
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Above Moderate	Total
RHNA	2,476	1,881	2,336	5,666	12,358
(Built)	175	467	919	8,491	10,052
(Inventory)	2,368	1,802	1,553	--	6,250
Excess	(67)	(592)	(253)	(2,825)	(3,737)

*Summary of Table 5-3 and 5-7 in Housing Element Background Report

County and SANDAG Population Forecasts		
Forecast	Homes	Pop
GP Update Original Target		660,000
GP Update 2002 Working Map	238,470	678,500
SANDAG series 10 2030 Forecast	236,900	682,800
SANDAG Series 11 2030 Forecast	235,861	723,392
SANDAG Series 12 2030 Forecast	202,882	616,820
SANDAG Series 12 2050 Forecast	222,890	694,464
GP Update PC Tent. Recommendation (w/ SANDAG Assumptions)	231,539	717,213